

Google Sheets - formatting

This tutorial will help you use Google Sheets to format your cells for better legibility. You can make a copy of [this spreadsheet](#) and follow along. It is data of zoo animals, their Taxon/Class (like Mammalia or Reptilia) and their life expectancy.

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Common Name	Scientific Name	TaxonClass	Expected life expectancy	Data verified
2	Addax	Addax nasomaculatus	Mammalia	13.4	
3	Agouti, Brazilian	Dasyprocta leporina	Mammalia	8.1	
4	Alligator, Chinese	Alligator sinensis	Reptilia	30.9	
5	Anoa, Lowland	Bubalus depressicornis	Mammalia	17.7	
6	Anteater, Giant	Myrmecophaga tridactyla	Mammalia	19.7	
7	Antelope, Roan	Hippotragus equinus	Mammalia	12.5	
8	Antelope, Sable	Hippotragus niger	Mammalia	11.3	

Coloring in cells based on the value

Sometimes you want to color in cells based on the value you enter in the cell.

1. Select the entire column of the data you want to format

If you click the very top of a column (the area that says A, B, C, etc.), it will select the entire column.

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Common Name	Scientific Name	TaxonClass	Expected life expectancy	Data verified
2	Addax	Addax nasomaculatus	Mammalia	13.4	
3	Agouti, Brazilian	Dasyprocta leporina	Mammalia	8.1	
4	Alligator, Chinese	Alligator sinensis	Reptilia	30.9	

2. Go to **Format > Conditional Formatting**

Zoo animal data
☆
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File Edit View Insert **Format** Data Tools Extensions Help
Last edit was 5 minutes ago

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TaxonClass

	A		D	E
1	Common Name		ted life expectancy	Data verified
2	Addax		13.4	
3	Agouti, Brazilian		8.1	
4	Alligator, Chinese		30.9	
5	Anoa, Lowland		17.7	
6	Anteater, Giant		19.7	
7	Antelope, Roan		12.5	
8	Antelope, Sable		11.3	
9	Aracari, Green		7.9	
10	Argus, Great		10.8	
11	Armadillo, Southern Three-banc		17.6	
12	Baboon, Hamadryas		27.3	
13	Barasingha		11.9	
14	Barbet, Red and Yellow		4.6	
15	Bat, Rodrigues Fruit		14.4	
16	Bat, Straw-Colored Fruit		19	
17	Bear, Andean Spectacled	Tremarctos ornatus	Mammalia	26.1

🎨 Theme

123 Number

B Text

≡ Alignment

📄 Wrapping

🔄 Rotation

📏 Font size

🔗 Merge cells

📊 Conditional formatting

🎨 Alternating colors

🗑 Clear formatting

B
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3. How to use Conditional format rules

This is what the Conditional format panel looks like.

The area **outlined in red** is one "rule".

Each rule has two options:

Format cells if: Determines which cells the rule applies to. There are options for both words (e.g. if "Mammalia" is in the cell) and numbers (e.g. if the life expectancy is greater than 5.)

Formatting style: Determine what formatting you want to apply to those cells

Conditional format rules

Single color Color scale

Apply to range

C1:C1000

Format rules

Format cells if...

Is not empty

Formatting style

Default

B I U A Fill color

Cancel Done

+ Add another rule

4. Let's try this out

In this example, try two tasks.

In the first exercise, let's color in cells based on their **TaxonClass.**

I've already selected all of column C (**TaxonClass**) and opened up the **Conditional format rules**.

The rule is to check if the **Text contains** the word "Mammalia".

The formatting is a **purple background**.

Once finished, click **+ Add another rule**.

Conditional format rules

Single color

Color scale

Apply to range

C1:C1000

Format rules

Format cells if...

Text contains

Mammalia

Formatting style

Custom

B

I

U

S

A

Cancel

Done

+ Add another rule

Let's check if the **Text starts with** the word "Rept".

Conditional format rules

Single color

Color scale

Apply to range

C1:C1000

Format rules

Format cells if...

Text starts with

Rept

Formatting style

Custom

B

I

U

~~S~~

A ▾

 ▾

Cancel

Done

+ Add another rule

Now let's color every other cell gray.

This time, let's check if the cell **Is not empty**.

The formatting is a **gray background**.

Conditional format rules

Single color

Color scale

Apply to range

C1:C1000

Format rules

Format cells if...

Is not empty

Formatting style

Custom

B

I

U

S

A

Cancel

Done

+ Add another rule

When you're finished, click **Done**.

Conditional format rules

123

Text contains "Mammalia"

C1:C1000

123

Text starts with "Rept"

C1:C1000

123

Cell is not empty

C1:C1000

+ Add another rule

On your own: Try formatting in the **Expected Life expectancy** column with the following rules:

- If the value is greater than 20, color it in blue

- If the value is greater than 10, color it in green
- If the value is greater than 5, color it in orange
- If the cell is not empty (so all others), color it in red

A pulldown for your cell

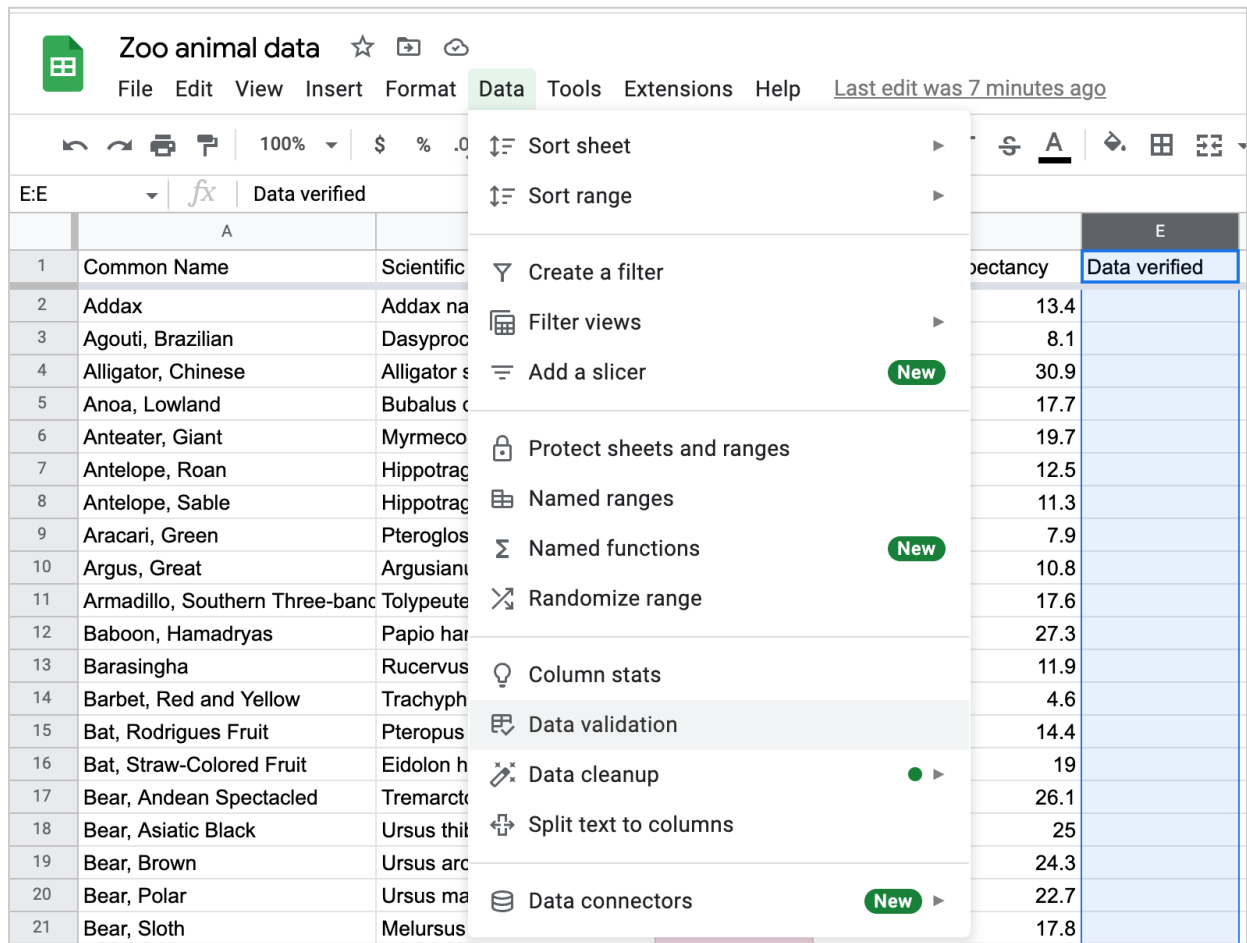
Sometimes you only want to allow people to input data that is one of a few values, like "Yes" and "No".

1. Select the entire column of the data you want to format

If you click the very top of a column (the area that says A, B, C, etc.), it will select the entire column.

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Common Name	Scientific Name	TaxonClass	Expected life expectancy	Data verified
2	Addax	Addax nasomaculatus	Mammalia	13.4	
3	Agouti, Brazilian	Dasyprocta leporina	Mammalia	8.1	
4	Alligator, Chinese	Alligator sinensis	Reptilia	30.9	
5	Anoa, Lowland	Bubalus depressicornis	Mammalia	17.7	
6	Anteater, Giant	Myrmecophaga tridactyla	Mammalia	19.7	
7	Antelope, Roan	Hippotragus equinus	Mammalia	12.5	
8	Antelope, Sable	Hippotragus niger	Mammalia	11.3	
9	Aracari, Green	Pteroglossus viridis	Aves	7.9	

2. Go to Data > Data validation



The screenshot shows a Google Sheets interface for a spreadsheet titled "Zoo animal data". The "Data" menu is open, displaying various options. The "Data validation" option is highlighted. The spreadsheet contains a table with animal names and their scientific names. The "Data verified" column is highlighted in blue.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Longevity	Data verified
Addax	Addax nasuta	13.4	
Agouti, Brazilian	Dasyprocta	8.1	
Alligator, Chinese	Alligator sinensis	30.9	
Anoa, Lowland	Bubalus	17.7	
Anteater, Giant	Myrmecophaga	19.7	
Antelope, Roan	Hippotragus	12.5	
Antelope, Sable	Hippotragus	11.3	
Aracari, Green	Pteroglossus	7.9	
Argus, Great	Argusianus	10.8	
Armadillo, Southern Three-banded	Tolypeutes	17.6	
Baboon, Hamadryas	Papio hamadryas	27.3	
Barasingha	Rucervus	11.9	
Barbet, Red and Yellow	Trachyphaps	4.6	
Bat, Rodrigues Fruit	Pteropus	14.4	
Bat, Straw-Colored Fruit	Eidolon helvum	19	
Bear, Andean Spectacled	Tremarctos	26.1	
Bear, Asiatic Black	Ursus thibetanus	25	
Bear, Brown	Ursus arctos	24.3	
Bear, Polar	Ursus maritimus	22.7	
Bear, Sloth	Melursus	17.8	

3. Create the possible values you want in that cell

This is the **Data validation** panel.

Under **Criteria**, there are various options. But the easiest option is to use **List of items** and then put all the possible values in that textbox, separated by a comma.

Data validation

Cell range: data!E1:E1000

Criteria: List of items

☒ Show dropdown list in cell

On invalid data: ☒ Show warning ☐ Reject input

Appearance: ☐ Show validation help text:

Cancel

Remove validation

Save

Then click Save.

On your own: Try making another column called "Rating" and allow the interface to create a pulldown of numbers between 1 and 10.